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House of Representatives

Texas Independence Day

OF TEXAS
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, March 2, 2005

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. Fortenberry). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. Poe) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. POE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor the unique history of the great State of Texas. Today, March 2, marks Texas Independence Day. On this day, 169 years ago, Texas declared its independence from Mexico and its dictator, Santa Anna, the 19th century Saddam Hussein.

In 1836, in the small farm village of Washington-on-the-Brazos, 54 Texians, as they called themselves in those days, gathered to do something bold and courageous: Sign the Texas Declaration of Independence and once and for all "declare that the people of Texas do now constitute a free, sovereign, and independent republic."

As these determined delegates met to declare independence, Santa Anna and 6,000 enemy troops were marching on an old beat-up Spanish mission that we now call the Alamo, where Texas defenders stood defiant, stood determined. They were led by a 27-year-old lawyer by the name of William Barrett Travis. The Alamo and its 186 Texans were all that stood between the invaders and the people of Texas. And behind the cold, dark, damp walls of that Alamo, Commander William Barrett Travis sent the following appeal to Texas requesting aide.

This appeal read in part: "To all the people of Texas and Americans in the world, I am besieged by a thousand or more of the enemy under Santa Anna. I have sustained a continual bombardment and cannon fire for over 24 hours and have not lost a man. The enemy has demanded surrender at its discretion, otherwise the fort will be put to the sword. I have answered that demand with a cannon shot, and the flag still waves proudly over the walls. I shall never surrender or retreat. I call upon you in the name of liberty, patriotism, and everything dear to our character to come to our aid with all dispatch. If this call is neglected, I am determined to sustain myself for as long as possible and die like a soldier who never forgets what is due to his own honor and that of his country. Victory or death. William Barrett Travis, Commander of the Alamo."

After 13 days of glory at the Alamo, Commander Travis and his men sacrificed their lives on the altar of freedom. Those lives lost would not be in vain. Their determination paid off. And because heroes like William Barrett Travis, Davy Crockett, and Jim Bowie held out for so long, Santa Anna's forces took such great losses they became battered, demoralized, and diminished. As Travis said, "victory will cost them more dearly than defeat."

General Sam Houston, in turn, had the time he needed to devise a strategy to rally other Texas volunteers to ultimately defeat Santa Anna at the Battle of San Jacinto on April 21, 1836. The war was over, and the Lone Star flag was visible all across the broad, bold, brazen plains of Texas.

The Alamo defenders were from every State in the United States and 13 foreign countries. They were black, brown, and white, ages 16 through 67, and they were all volunteers. They were mavericks, revolutionaries, farmers, shopkeepers, and freedom fighters. They came together to fight for something they believed in: Freedom.

Freedom has a cost. It always does. It always will. And as we pause to remember those who lost their lives so that Texas could be a free Nation, we cannot forget those Americans that are currently fighting in lands across the seas for the United States' continued freedom and liberty today.

Texas Independence Day is a day of pride and reflection in the Lone Star State. It is a day we remember to pay tribute to heroes like William Barrett Travis, Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, Jim Bonham, Sam Houston, and the rest of those volunteers who fought the evil tyrant and terrorist Santa Anna. It was an effort to make Texas free, and that effort was successful.

On this Texas Independence Day, let us not forget those brave men and women in our military that are fighting to preserve and uphold our freedom from a new world threat of terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Congress and the country will join me in celebrating this Texas Independence Day. In Colonel Travis' final letter and appeal for aid, he signed off with three words that I leave with you now: "God and Texas." "God and Texas." "God and Texas." And the rest, as they say, is Texas history.